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The MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai will host the first match

IPL DATES OUT: MI vs RCB OPENER ON APRIL 9, FINAL ON MAY 30

Chennai, Mumbai, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Kolkata to host matches. First match in Chepauk, final at Motera

ALL MATCHES IN NEUTRAL VENUES

Though the tournament will take place in India, none of the teams will get to play at their home ground as only six venues are to be used. To reduce travel, the IPL has introduced a caravan format with two cities paired together. Chennai & Mumbai legs will happen from April 9 to 25. Delhi & Ahmedabad from April 26 to May 8. Bengaluru & Kolkata from May 9 to May 23

TO BE HELD BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

- The tournament which will run for 52 days will witness 11 double-headers. The afternoon matches will begin at 3.30 PM, while the evening match will start at 7.30 PM
- Crowds won't be allowed in any of the venue as the IPL wants to maintain a strict bio-bubble | P13

FIVE

NO OF IPL TITLES FOR MUMBAI INDIANS. THE MOST FOR ANY TEAM

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

BENGAL DEVELOPMENT

Modi set a 25-year goal for powering Bengal to the pinnacle of the development index after the state votes BJP to power, by the time India celebrates its Independence centenary in 2047

Mithun Chakraborty seeks blessings from PM Narendra Modi after joining the BJP, at a rally in Kolkata on Sunday | PTI

Modi, Didi snipe at each other to deflect charges

Both trade allegations on running syndicates, misleading electorate

PRANAB MONDAL @Kolkata

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched a broadside against West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee ahead of the state elections for grooming nephew Abhishek Banerjee as her successor. "Bengal's people had elected you a decade ago as their *Didi*. But you remained an aunt of your nephew all the time," he said.

Poking her for a recent scooter ride in protest against the hike in fuel prices and tying it to her decision to contest from Nandigram, he said he should not be blamed if the two-wheeler meets with an accident in the constituency of East Midnapore district.

Addressing a massive rally at Kolkata's Brigade Parade Ground Modi accused Mamata of treating everyone against her as an enemy. "You are not only Bengal's daughter, you are also India's daughter. A few days ago, you rode a scooter and the people of the country prayed you ride safely. Had you fallen off, the state where the scooter was manufactured would have become your enemy. You veered the direction of your scooter towards Nandigram from Bhowanipore. I am a well-wisher of everyone. If your scooter meets with a mishap there, then what can I do?" he figuratively said.

While Modi reiterated the charge of Trinamool goons running corrupt syndicates, Mamata attacked him and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, saying it is they who are part of a syndicate. "Narendra Modi and Amit Shah are the only syndicate in India. Fuel prices increased, Covid happened but the PM was nowhere to be found," she said after a protest march in Siliguri against the steep hike in LPG refill price. She also alleged that Modi was peddling lies to mislead the electorate.

Yesteryear actor Mithun Chakraborty joined the BJP and shared the dais with Modi. He likened himself to a deadly snake: "Don't mistake me for a harmless snake, I am a cobra, I can kill people with a bite," he said

Activist now wants to withdraw case against Jarkiholi on 'moral grounds'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

A day after six ministers in the B S Yediyurappa Cabinet got a temporary injunction from a city court, restraining the media from telecasting or publishing any news or showing defamatory footage and pictures, social activist Dinesh Kallahalli, who had filed a complaint against BJP leader **Ramesh Jarkiholi**, has now written to the police stating that he wants to withdraw it.

The activist's complaint, accusing Jarkiholi of sexual harassment, had eventually led to the latter's resignation from the council of ministers. Kallahalli said he was distancing himself from the case on 'moral grounds' as former CM H D Kumaraswamy had alleged that ₹5 crore had changed hands in the case.

An advocate, representing Kallahalli, turned up at Cubbon Park police station on Sunday afternoon and submitted a petition on behalf of the activist. The police, who received the petition, reportedly told the advocate that they cannot stop the investigation at this stage. The police, who have not registered an FIR yet, have continued their efforts to trace the woman seen in the alleged sex-tape. A senior police officer said that they will consult legal experts and also summon Kallahalli, if required, before deciding on the future course of action.

In the petition, Kallahalli has stated he is withdrawing the complaint in the interest of the survivor and society. He expressed displeasure over the photos and videos of the survivor going viral on social media and people defaming her. "I had requested in the complaint only to investigate whether there was sexual harassment. I had done this based on the information provided by a family member of the survivor. However, the issue boomeranged against me and the survivor, as many doubted my intention and made derogatory and baseless statements. Instead of supporting me and helping the survivor get justice, many targeted me and questioned my integrity. This is nothing but 'shooting the messenger'," he stated. P4

'COVISHIELD WORKS BETTER WITH 12-WEEK GAP'

The Oxford University-AstraZeneca's vaccine for Covid-19, marketed under the brand name Covishield in India, shows higher efficacy of 81.3 per cent if the second dose is administered 12 weeks after the first, according to a study published in the medical journal The Lancet. Researchers say they found that Covishield's efficacy was only 55.1 per cent when the two doses were administered less than six weeks apart, but it was higher when the participants received one standard dose and another low dose, instead of two standard doses. DETAILS | P3

Budget will be a document for development, says BSY

FOCUS ON WOMEN

The budget is expected to focus more on development works and women's welfare. The State Government had resorted to heavy borrowings and raised loans to augment resources for development works since November, as more funds were used in fighting the Covid war over the last 10 months.

ANUSHA RAVI @Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister B S Yediyurappa will present the Karnataka Budget 2021-22 at 12 noon on Monday, the eighth in his political career and the third during his present term as CM since July 2019.

After a year marred by the Covid-19 pandemic, incessant floods and economic slowdown, Yediyurappa has assured that the budget will be growth-oriented with a focus on women empowerment.

The CM termed his budget a 'Vikasa Patra' (development document), on the eve its presentation. The CM's official Twitter handle said he will present the budget at 12 noon with the hashtag 'Karnataka development document'.

The CM will hold a meeting of ministers at 11 am in Vidhana Soudha to seek the cabinet's approval for the budget document. At 12 noon, he will present the budget in the Legislative Assembly. The Budget 2021-22 is expected to be a tightrope walk for Yediyurappa. Following the presentation, Yediyurappa will hold interactions to explain the outlay and the expected outcomes in detail. Both Houses of the legislature will discuss the budget during the month-long session before passing it for implementation from April 1. Yediyurappa had presented a surplus budget for the 2020-21 fiscal despite a ₹11,887-crore reduction in Central funds to the state for the 2019-20 fiscal. P4

LOUD AND CLEAR

Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait plays the 'Chanda Melam' with protesters from Kerala during an agitation against the Centre's contentious new farm laws, at UP Gate in New Delhi on Sunday | PTI

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AND 4 PAGES OF CITY EXPRESS

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EXPRESS READ

Biden set to sign order pushing voting rights

Washington: A new executive order from United States President Joe Biden directs federal agencies to take a series of steps to promote voting access, a move that comes as congressional Democrats press for a sweeping voting and elections bill to counter efforts to restrict voting access. P11

Sindhu suffers defeat in Swiss Open final

Basel: World Champion P V Sindhu finished a distant second in the Swiss Open final after being completely routed by Olympic gold medallist Carolina Marin of Spain in a lop-sided women's singles title clash here on Sunday. The 25-year-old Indian couldn't match the speed and accuracy of top seed Marin. P13

Banks slash home loan rates to decadal lows

Mumbai: Flush with excess liquidity as general credit demand is still way below desired levels, leading home loan providers such as the public sector State Bank of India, and private players HDFC, ICICI Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank have slashed their rates to decadal lows, leaving the consumers spoilt for choice.

'China to operate bullet trains in Tibet before July'

Beijing: China will operate bullet trains in Tibet, close to the Indian border in Arunachal Pradesh before July this year, marking the opening of high-speed train services to all Chinese mainland provincial-level regions, a senior official has said. A 435-km rail link to Lhasa will run Fuxing high-speed trains.

AT THE WHEEL

Women loco pilots on track to realising their dreams

S LALITHA @ Bengaluru

A much-needed move by the South Western Railway Zone to create separate washrooms and retiring rooms (Running Rooms) for women, coupled with encouragement, has resulted in the entry of 33 women Assistant Loco Pilots into the profession of steering trains in the last 19 months. With these highly qualified women, along with three Loco Pilots, Bengaluru Division now has the biggest contingent of women train drivers in South India and also figures among the divisions with the highest number in the country.

In a bid to ensure safety and comfort for women, adequate facilities were put in place at Bengaluru City, Arasikere, Jolarpettai and Mysuru railway stations within the last one year, says V Ramachandran, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer, Traction Operations, Bengaluru Division. The women were inducted in three batches beginning August 2019.

Minu Mubaraka C from Kerala is among the recruits who hesitantly took on the role. "I was keen on a government job after completing my M.Tech in Electrical and Communications. After I cleared the ALP exam, I was full of doubts when I understood the nature of the job. I had a 2.5-year old baby and my husband Mohammed Shareef was employed in Dubai. He encouraged me and gave me the confidence to take up the job and we decided to hire a nanny for our girl," she said.

"Like in every job, there are challenges, that's all. As a mother, you may have to do a bit of sacrifice by being away from your child when she goes to bed as we may have to spend our nights at different stations. But the job is not very difficult." All facilities for women are provided and male colleagues are extremely supportive, she adds.

V S Abhirami (25), a B.Tech graduate from Kerala who got her appointment order in January 2020, says, "This is my first job. My father was a technician in the Railways. I have gained so much in this job. The job is highly respected and it feels so nice when travellers come over and say 'Thank You' when we reach the destination." P5